VISIT…

THE MINISTRY OF WINDS

A short adventure for four 6th-level player characters

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INTRODUCTION

Deep in the heart of the city lies that strange edifice. Everyone knows about it or, that is to say, everyone knows it is there. No one ever really seems to have much more information about the granite structure, except that it has no windows or doors, and it is surrounded by swirling wind. Most people call it the Obelisk of the Winds. Tales are told of its secrets, but none of them seems to hold the truth.

This urban miniadventure can take place in just about any city in your campaign—just set it in the part of town that works best for your current needs. If you have *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*, the city can be Hommlet; you might also suggest a tie between the Ministry of the Winds described here and the Air Temple in *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil* (Area 73 in Chapter 5: The Crater Ridge Mines).

PREPARATION

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual* to use this adventure. If you plan to tie this scenario in with the Air Temple as mentioned above, you'll need the new *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil* adventure.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Unshaded boxes contain important information for you, including special instructions. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form or, where appropriate, the proper page in the *Monster Manual* is referenced.

This adventure uses one of the "Ruins 1" maps by Dennis Kauth from the Official D&D Website's Map-a-Week feature (Aug. 31, 2000). It's reprinted on page 3.

BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Winds was once a powerful group of four spellcasters that built the Obelisk of the Winds. They lived in the area more than 200 years ago, eventually sealing themselves off in the obelisk and its dungeon level (see map of that level on page 3) to save themselves from an impending apocalypse.

Years later, when some explorers named Narev and Justina entered the dungeon level through the sewers, the spirits of the original Ministry members—now certain that the disaster they once feared had passed—exerted their influence upon the two, effectively pos-

sessing them. (See the sidebar on page 5.)Trapped for decades, the original Ministry members have lost their grasp on reality. In the delusions of their twisted minds, they now seek to harness the power of the winds to take over the city above.

To this end, Narev and Justina tricked a minotaur named Traan and a barghest named Erin-kahnor into coming to the obelisk, whereupon the newcomers found themselves effectively possessed as well.

With the Ministry once again complete, the four plot and scheme in their madness.

CHARACTER HOOKS

Use one of the following hooks to get the player characters (PCs) interested in investigating the obelisk:

- The local wizard's guild is perplexed by the place and its obvious magic. They know it's hollow, and would like to know what's inside. They hire the PCs to go in and report back about what they find, offering to create for each PC a magic item worth up to 2,000 gp market value in payment.
- Narev's sister Nareis (LN female human, Sor4) is looking for her missing brother, who once told her he had been inside the strange Obelisk of the Winds. She will pay any group of adventures 5,000 gp to bring her brother back to her. She can tell them that Narev is a sorcerer like her and that he has always been interested in history.
- Deddin Knoc (N male half-elf, Clr5 [Obad-Hai]) knows about the Ministry of Winds. Not long ago its members stole a sacred relic of his church called the Scepter of Clouds, and he wants it back. He offers a 5,000 gp reward for the scepter. He can inform the PCs that the members of the Ministry live under the obelisk and are interested in ancient things and the elements, specifically air. He can tell the party that the Ministry is made up of a human, an elf, a minotaur, and a goblin

Notice that none of these hooks involves "stopping the evil Ministry before it meets its goal." That's because the Ministry's goal is absurd and its members are all insane. Even though the Ministry thinks it can conquer all the surrounding lands, and even though its members are dangerous, this is not a "stop-the-apocalypse" adventure.

Gather Information or Bardic Knowledge Check

If the PCs take the time to ask around, or if a bard is present, they can attempt to discern more information.

- DC 10: A door occasionally appears at the base of obelisk, when the winds die down. No one's ever been brave enough to open the door.
- DC 20: The supernatural winds around the obelisk die down when real winds blow through town with some strength.
- DC 25: Long ago, a group called itself the Ministry of Winds. The four spellcasters who made up the group built the obelisk.
- DC 30: It's likely that, if there's an underground level to the obelisk, it joins up with the sewer system somewhere in the city.

OBELISK FEATURES

The walls of the Obelisk of the Winds are smooth, 8-foot-thick stone (hardness 8; 720 hp; Break DC 80). The DC to climb them is 20.

OUTSIDE THE OBELISK

When the PCs arrive at the obelisk, read the following text.

> The obelisk rises to a height of about 120 feet and measures some 40 feet on a side, growing slightly thinner toward the top. The stone is a mottled gray and brown granite, with no features. As you had heard, there is a strong breeze here, almost as if the winds circle and eddy around this strange edifice.

If a real wind blows (on any given day, there's a 1 in 12 chance per hour), the winds around the obelisk die down and a door appears at the base. It is made of the same stone as the obelisk (**Stone Door:** 4 inches thick; hardness 8; 60 hp; Break DC 28) and is sealed with an *arcane lock*. The gust of wind that brought the door into existence lasts only 1d4 minutes.

A *gust of wind* spell directed at the obelisk also calls the door into existence. In this case, the door remains for 1d4 rounds.

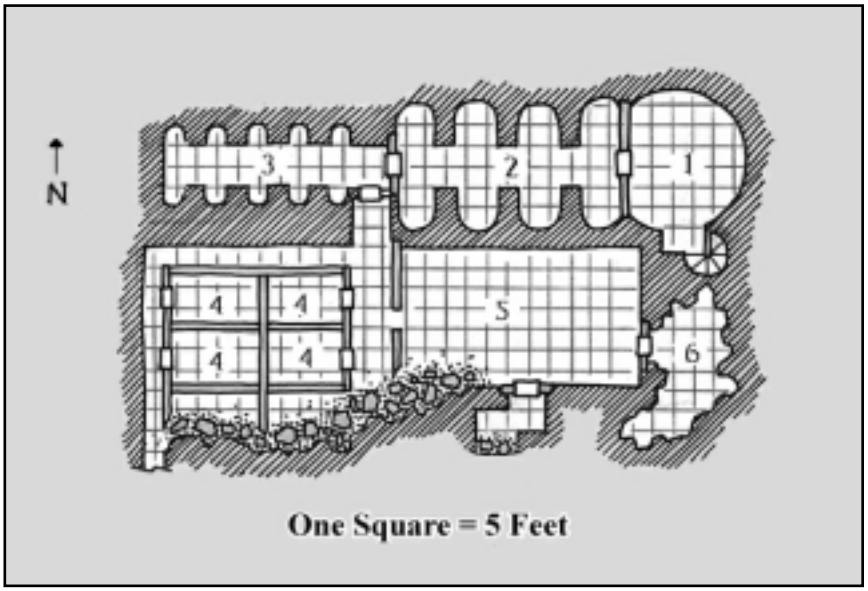
LEVEL 1: ENTRANCE

Read or paraphrase the following text aloud:

> This dark chamber is a little larger than 20 feet across. The stone walls are covered in intricate carvings. The floor is smooth, and the ceiling looms high above in the darkness.

There is no map for this simple chamber.

If someone examines the carvings on the walls, the character may attempt a Knowledge (arcana) or a Knowledge (history) check with a DC of 25. A success at either reveals that the carvings are part of an ancient pictogram system that melded magical knowledge and philosophy to record historical events. A Decipher Script check (DC 30) can translate these pictograms, although they are really just boastful, poetic praises for the power of the four winds (one pictogram for each cardinal direction).



Those involved in the study may also make Search checks (DC 20). Success means that the character found a place where the carvings are deep enough to allow one to climb up the wall (to Level 2). The Climb check DC is only 10.

Further, anyone searching the floor can discover a poorly concealed secret hatch (DC 15 to find) that lifts and slides aside to expose a spiral stone stair leading down.

LEVEL 2: THE WATCHER (EL 6)

Read or paraphrase the following text aloud:

> At 60 feet above the floor of the entrance chamber, a small opening leads into the upper level of the obelisk. Only about 15 feet across, this strange room holds an interesting secret. The stone walls of the obelisk on this level are somehow transparent—you can see the city sprawl around you from up here! Before you can enjoy the view, however, you realize that you are not alone.
>
> A strange creature with ruby-red scales, a mandibled head, and four arms sits in an elevated chair in the center of the room, writing on a piece of parchment. It wears a loose yellow cloak and keeps weapons—two short swords—close at hand. Hundreds, if not thousands of sheets of parchment lie scattered about the floor around the creature.

The elevated chair sits 6 feet off the ground on wooden supports. The one-way transparency of the walls is a permanent magical effect.

Creature: Ssiigg is a civilized xill, but unlike most of his kind, he is not terribly bloodthirsty and violent. In fact, he is content to watch the events of the city and record them. The Ministry of Winds provides him with parchment, and he provides them with the highlights of what he sees in his unsleeping vigil. If the PCs do not make their presence known, Ssiigg does not stop writing. If they interrupt him in any way, he leaps from his chair and attacks with his two short swords and claws. He fights to the death.

Xill: 34 hp; see *Monster Manual* page 187.

Treasure: The parchments, if gathered, would be worth up to 1,500 gp to an interested buyer (they contain a lot of information about happenings in the city over the past eight months).

DUNGEON LEVEL

Each of the doors on this level is a sturdy wooden specimen (**Wooden Doors:** 2 inches thick; hardness 5; hp 20; AC 5; Break DC 23).

The ceilings are all 15 feet high.

Once the PCs proceed down the spiral stairs to the Dungeon Level, the members of the Ministry of Winds act according to the situation. Most likely, Narev and Traan move to confront intruders as soon as they become aware of them, while Justina, her wolf, and Erin-kahnor move to Area 5 to defend the vault (Area 6).

Area 1: Clouds

Read or paraphrase the following text aloud:

> The spiral stairs descend into the southern side of a mostly round room almost 30 feet across. The walls, floor, and domed ceiling have been painted sky-blue and white, like a cloud-filled sky. However, now—surely many decades after this handiwork was completed—the paint looks faded and chipped.

This room is empty.

Area 2: Hall of History

Read or paraphrase the following text aloud:

> This oddly-shaped hall is filled with large, fluidly-carved alcoves. The walls are all covered in a strange mixture of abstract carvings and a myriad of tiny images.

This carving is of the same pictogram language found on Level 1. It tells the ancient history of the surrounding area and speaks of the great influence of the Ministry of Winds in all affairs. A translation—following a successful Knowledge (history) check (DC 25)—suggests that this is all wild, arrogant exaggeration. A successful Search check (DC 20) reveals that some of the carvings, toward the west end, are very new. If translated, they relate that, after a long entombment, the Ministry of Winds has returned and soon will conquer the lands that arose in their absence, using the all-powerful Scepter of Clouds. (This is, of course, mad raving—the Scepter of Clouds isn't even magical; see Area 4.) This carving was completed by Justina.

Area 3: Hall of Sacred Wind (EL 8)

Read or paraphrase the following text aloud:

> This hallway is filled with powerful winds, blowing from west to east. There are 10 small alcoves, each of which hides a shambling, humanoid form that towers at least 8 feet high. These creatures begin to lurch out of the recesses and into the windy hall, brittle flesh barely hanging onto ancient bone.

The continuous magically-generated winds of this hall are such that characters must make Fortitude saves (DC 15) each round or suffer ill effects (as detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 87). If anyone attempts to dispel the wind, treat the effect as though created by a 15th-level caster.

Creatures. Ten Large-sized zombies (they all were once ogres) occupy this hallway and attack anyone that enters it, other than the members of the Ministry of Winds. Because they are Large, they can ignore the effects of the wind. They do not follow foes out of the hall, however.

Zombies (10): 30, 15, 25, 42, 21, 38, 29, 35, 27, 34 hp; see *Monster Manual* page 192.

Area 4: Ministry Quarters (EL 6 x 4)

There are four of these rooms, each the personal chamber of a single member of the Ministry of Winds. NW: Justina, NE: Narev, SW: Traan, SE: Erin-kahnor. The text below describes all these rooms; the northern chambers boast lit oil lamps in addition to the standard belongings.

> This chamber has a bed, a small table, a pair of chairs and some miscellaneous belongings that lead one to believe that this is a bedchamber where someone currently lives.

The area south of these rooms and Area 5 collapsed long ago due to age. The members of the Ministry have cleared away all the clutter except where shown on the map. The path south leads into the city sewers—this is how the Ministry members move about, such as when they raided the temple of Obad-Hai and stole the Scepter of Clouds. Characters who learn about the potential sewer entrance and investigate eventually come in through this passage, giving the Ministry little or no warning.

Creatures. These are the actual members of today's Ministry of Winds. Each is "possessed" by an ancient spirit that guides them but nevertheless does not alter their abilities. For example, despite the fact than an ancient cleric possesses Traan, he retains the abilities of a normal minotaur—no more, no less (except that he, like the other members, can read and write in the strange pictogram language mentioned earlier). The possessing spirits merely allow these disparate individuals to work together toward the common goal of conquering the surrounding lands. This, of course, is an

insane goal for these four, but the possessing spirits are too mad to realize it. . Despite the absurdity of their goal, they are dangerous and will almost certainly pose a threat to the city's residents eventually, if not stopped.

Narev: Male human Sor6; CR 6; Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d4+6; hp 23; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 11); Atk +3 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +3 ranged (1d4/19–20, dagger); SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6; AL CN; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +6; Knowledge (history) +10, Listen +5, Spellcraft +10; Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Toughness.

Possessions: Ring of protection +1, potion of cure moderate wounds, scrolls of *gust of wind, see invisibility,* and *fly,* two daggers, pouch containing spell components, key to Area 6.

Spells Known (6/7/6/4; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, light, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*endure elements, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*cat's grace, invisibility*; 3rd—*lightning bolt* †.

† Because of Spell Focus (Evocation), the base DC for saves against this spell is 15 + spell level.

Justina: Female elf Clr6 [Obad-Hai]; CR 6; Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d8; hp 29; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 20 (touch 10, flat-footed 20); Atk +7 melee (1d8+3, *+1 heavy mace*) or +5 ranged (1d6/×3, shortbow); SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +8; AL CN; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Knowledge (religion) +5; Listen +7, Search +2, Spot +5; Spell Focus (Enchantment), Toughness, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

Possessions: +1 heavy mace, potions of cure light wounds and *levitate,* masterwork plate armor, large steel shield, shortbow, 10 arrows.

Spells Prepared (5/4+1/4+1/3+1; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*create water, light, read magic, resistance*†, *virtue*; 1st—*bless, command*†, *endure elements, obscuring mist**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength, endurance* (2), *hold person*†, *wind wall** (2); 3rd—*dispel magic, gaseous form**, *magic vestment, protection from elements.*

* Domain spell. *Domains:* Air (turn earth creatures, command air creatures), Animal (*animal friendship* 1/day).

† Because of Spell Focus (Enchantment), the base DC for saves against these spells is 15 + spell level.

Dire wolf companion: 44 hp; see *Monster Manual* page 57.

Traan (minotaur): 38 hp; see *Monster Manual* page 137. Uses a *+1 huge greataxe* (add +1 to attack rolls and damage).

Erin-kahnor (barghest): 49 hp; see *Monster Manual* page 49.

Tactics: A fight in the Hall of Sacred Wind alerts these NPCs (unless the battle is in a silenced area, or similar precautions are used). Carefully count down the rounds that the Ministry of Winds has to prepare as follows. In preparing for an encounter, Narev casts *cat's grace* on himself, Traan, and Erin-kahnor, and *invisibility* on himself (saving the last two 2nd-level slots for further *invisibility* for himself). If time permits, he casts *mage armor* on himself, Traan, and Erin-kahnor, and *shield* on himself. Justina casts *bull's strength* on herself, and *endurance* on herself and Narev, then *shield of faith, protection from elements* (fire), and *magic vestment* on herself.

In summary (if all preparations are completed, taking 9 rounds):

- **Narev:** Add +4 armor bonus and +7 cover bonus from shield to Narev's AC. Also add 1d4+1 points of Dexterity and Constitution, adjusting hp, AC, and saving throws accordingly.
- **Justina:** Add +3 deflection bonus and +2 enhancement bonus to Justina's AC. Also add 1d4+1 points of Dexterity, Strength, and Constitution to Justina, adjusting attack bonuses, damage, hp, AC, and saving throws accordingly.
- **Traan**: Add +4 armor bonus to AC. Also add 1d4+1 to Dexterity and adjust AC and saving throws accordingly.
- **Erin-kahnor**: Add +4 armor bonus to AC. Also add 1d4+1 to Dexterity and adjust AC and saving throws accordingly.

In battle, Traan wades into melee while Narev uses *lightning bolts* and *magic missiles*. Erin-kahnor uses his *charm*-related abilities and *emotion* power from a levitated position while Justina swings about with her mace. She converts her remaining spells in battle to healing spells if needed to help herself, her wolf companion, or Erin-kahnor.

The Original Ministry

Sealed forever in their fortress here, the original members of the Ministry of Winds are long dead. Their memories linger on, however, echoing through the chambers of the underground ruin. They are not true ghosts, wraiths, or spectres—although one might still refer to them as "spirits" of a sort.

They are simply lingering memories with strong wills. When Narev and Justina entered the obelisk, they activated those memories and found themselves overwhelmed by them. However, this "possession" will not happen again. PCs will not be taken over by the Ministry's memory-spirits.

On the other hand, not being truly undead, the possessing memories and wills of the original Ministry members cannot be turned or affected by undead-affecting spells. A possessing spirit can be forever banished from its host by the following spells: *dismissal, break enchantment, dispel evil, banishment, holy word, limited wish, miracle,* or *wish*. Once banished, the spirit disappears forever.

Treasure. These characters have some gear, but no other treasure. All of their valuables are kept in the Vault (Area 6).

Area 5: Gathering Chamber

Read or paraphrase the following text aloud:

> This long chamber once boasted beautiful tapestries on the walls, but now they hang in tatters. At the far east end sits a rectangular table with four chairs around it; a lantern atop it glows brightly.

Other than the table and chairs, this room is empty. The table has a piece of paper scrawled in Common by one of the Ministry members, describing how the original Ministry of Winds sealed itself here until Narev and Justina came and gave them new life, but it soon trails off into mad delusions of grandeur.

The iron door to Area 6 is iron and locked (see below).

Development: If alerted, Justina, her wolf, and Erinkahnor wait here to defend the vault.

Area 6: Vault (EL 3)

The door to this chamber is iron (**Iron Door:** 2 inches thick, hardness 10, 60 hp, Break DC 28) and locked (DC 30 to pick—Narev has the key). It is also trapped with a ward that goes off if someone opens the door without first saying, "The four winds reign supreme."

***Glyph of Warding*:** CR 3; 5-ft. lightning burst (3d8); Reflex save halves damage (DC 15); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Once past the trap and the door, the PCs are free to loot this vault.

> This cold, rough-hewn cave contains a large pile of coins, valuable-looking items, and strange miscellaneous trinkets.

Treasure: The strange pile of treasure includes 7,549 cp, 3,922 sp and 1,210 gp. It also features the following items:

- The Scepter of Clouds (a blue scepter with small white pearls worth 1,400 gp). Although it is a sacred relic of Obad-Hai and thus has irreplaceable religious value to that religion, it is not magical. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Wind members in their madness—especially Justina, once a cleric of Obad-Hai and acolyte of Deddin Knoc—believe it to be magical (despite the mundane results of their best efforts to test it).
- Eight gems worth the following: 800 gp, 400 gp, 350 gp, 300 gp, 175 gp, 90 gp, 50 gp, and 10 gp.
- A divine scroll of *wind wall*.
- A dark blue vase worth 50 gp.
- A broken ebony figurine of a bird (still worth 150 gp—300 gp if a *mend* spell is used).
- A masterwork heavy flail.
- Two vials of holy water.
- Three smokesticks.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

This obelisk is actually an interesting site for the PCs to occupy and adopt as their own if they defeat the Ministry. Otherwise, returning with the scepter, Narev (subdued, most likely), or information about the place (depending on which hook was used) gains the PCs their reward. If the members of the Ministry were not defeated conclusively, they begin plotting their revenge upon the PCs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monte Cook started working professionally in the game industry in 1988. In the employ of Iron Crown Enterprises, he worked with the *Rolemaster* and *Champions* games as an editor, developer, and designer.

In 1994 Monte came to work at TSR as a game designer. As a senior game designer with Wizards of the Coast, he codesigned the new edition of Dungeons & Dragons and authored the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. His newest release is *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*.

A graduate of the Clarion West writer's workshop, Monte has also published short stories and two novels. In his spare time, he runs anywhere from one to three games per week, holds a yearly game convention at his house, builds vast dioramas out of LEGO building bricks, and reads a lot of comics.

Monte designed the June 2001 adventure, A *Frigid Demise*, for the Official D&D Website. To read more of his recent d20 work, visit his home page at `www.montecook.com`.